



National Brownfields Assessment Pilot

Birmingham, AL

Outreach and Special Projects Staff (5101)

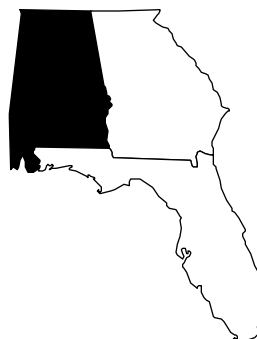
Quick Reference Fact Sheet

EPA's Brownfields Economic Redevelopment Initiative is designed to empower States, communities, and other stakeholders in economic redevelopment to work together in a timely manner to prevent, assess, safely clean up, and sustainably reuse brownfields. A brownfield is a site, or portion thereof, that has actual or perceived contamination and an active potential for redevelopment or reuse. Between 1995 and 1996, EPA funded 76 National and Regional Brownfields Assessment Pilots, at up to \$200,000 each, to support creative two-year explorations and demonstrations of brownfields solutions. EPA is funding more than 27 Pilots in 1997. The Pilots are intended to provide EPA, States, Tribes, municipalities, and communities with useful information and strategies as they continue to seek new methods to promote a unified approach to site assessment, environmental cleanup, and redevelopment.

BACKGROUND

EPA selected the City of Birmingham for a Brownfields Pilot. The City has also been selected as a pilot for EPA's Common Sense Initiative to review regulatory impacts on the iron and steel industry. The City's North Birmingham Industrial Redevelopment Project is a 900-acre planning area approximately one mile north of Birmingham, Alabama's City Center. Forty percent of the area property is vacant, in many cases due to contamination from old iron foundries and blast furnaces. The industrial area is surrounded by low income, predominately African-American neighborhoods. The project's efforts include: 1) a land use plan for the redevelopment of over 150 acres of vacant industrial land and dilapidated housing; 2) an improvement plan for Village Creek; 3) the extension of Finley Avenue, a critical industrial and neighborhood transportation link; and 4) the creation of the Birmingham Environmental Clearinghouse to carry out the Pilot's investigation and education activities. Other community-based projects, such as a revitalized merchant association have been initiated in response to the bottom-up planning process which has involved many local businesses as well as neighborhood residents.

PILOT SNAPSHOT



Birmingham, Alabama

Date of Award:
September 1995

Amount: \$200,000

Site Profile: The Pilot targets the North Birmingham Industrial Redevelopment Project area, which is a 900-acre planning zone one mile north of the City Center.

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Visit the EPA Brownfields Website at:
<http://www.epa.gov/brownfields>

OBJECTIVES

The Birmingham Pilot is working to remove environmental obstacles to the redevelopment of industrial lands in North Birmingham in order to create space for 2,000,000 square feet of commercial and light industrial buildings employing over 2,000 workers. In the course of environmental investigation and redevelopment planning, the community of approximately 10,000 has been kept informed of the many environmental and development issues.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

The Pilot has:

- Created the Birmingham Environmental Clearinghouse, a repository for the redevelopment area's brownfields environmental data;
- Recreated a "Redevelopment Authority." The design of this authority is based on products developed in a cooperative effort with the Northwest Indiana Brownfields Pilots and EPA's Common Sense Initiative; and
- Created a technical assistance team to analyze environmental issues, develop remediation plans, and provide financial resources to small businesses and community organizations unable to sustain environmental compliance efforts or undertake large scale remediation programs.

The Pilot is:

- Creating a technical and educational consortium to target environmental planning, research, educational, and technical resources on assessment and cleanup of brownfields in the North Birmingham redevelopment area; and
- Developing a comprehensive environmental plan that will link approaches to programs such as flood control and storm water and groundwater contamination reduction with remediation of soil and site-specific contamination.

LEVERAGING OTHER ACTIVITIES

Experience with the Birmingham Pilot has been a catalyst for related activities including the following.

- Developing a partnership of environmental activists; technical experts; City, State, and Federal officials; and members of the business community that will support the Pilot program with staff and materials.
- Four new companies have located in the project area as of April 1997.
- The redevelopment team is facilitating the purchase of 35 acres for the first phase of a 150-acre industrial park.
- EPA Region 4 assisted the project by intervening with Alabama's Highway Department to encourage the continuation of engineering work on the Finely Avenue extension.
- The brownfields team is working to raise funds to clean up a 40-acre site for housing, recreation, and light industry. The area is being designated as an urban renewal district to allow the use of public funds in it. The brownfields approach is to allow Finely Avenue Extension right-of-way purchase.